

PRESS RELEASE

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United We Win: Community Leaders Honored at United Way's 93rd Annual Celebration

Providence, R.I. (October 11, 2019) Highlighting a year that featured more than \$12 million invested in local initiatives that strengthen lives, United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) President and CEO Cortney Nicolato spread a message of unity while offering a glimpse of new programs on the horizon during the organization's 93rd Annual Celebration on October 10.

"Today, maybe more than ever before, we need to embrace unity to overcome the issues that hold our community back," says Nicolato. "We're at a critical moment, when we must work together to ensure the success of our schools, to demand a supply of affordable homes, and to best equip a ready and able workforce. This will position our beloved state for success."

Among the upcoming initiatives UWRI excitedly shared with the more than 400 guests who filled the WaterFire Arts Center was its recently announced partnership with Social Enterprise Greenhouse (SEG) to launch the *Nonprofit Innovation Lab*, and next April's first-ever *401 Gives*.

Where the *Nonprofit Innovation Lab* offers nonprofit executives a "Shark Tank-like" experience and opportunity to secure funding to implement creative solutions to social issues, *401 Gives* will bring a collective voice to nonprofits to deepen the state's culture of giving. *401 Gives* launches on April 1, 2020. The statewide day of giving on behalf of hundreds of local nonprofits has a goal to raise \$1 million.

"Every day I see the best of Rhode Islanders, people who step up and are passionate about helping their neighbors," added Nicolato. "And this is our chance to engage others by highlighting and supporting their great work."

Following the appointment of new members to UWRI's Board of Directors and its Community Advisory Board, the evening culminated with the recognition of five community leaders who have helped to make Rhode Island better for all. **It is the first time since the inception of the awards that the entire slate of honorees is women.** United Way's 2019 community champions and their respective awards are:

- 2019 Corporate Partnership Award: **BankNewport**, accepted by President & CEO, **Sandra Pattie**
- Young Leader Spark! Award: **Marcela Betancur**, Latino Policy Institute
- Women United Award: **Anne Ciresi**, FM Global
- Dante Mollo Labor Award: **Maribeth Calabro**, Providence Teachers Union
- John H. Chafee Lifetime Service Award: **Sharon Conard-Wells**, West Elmwood Housing Development Corp.

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Having recently celebrated its 200th anniversary, **BankNewport's** service to the community extends far beyond checking and savings accounts, and loans. For decades, the bank has been committed to UWRI's mission – its staff both raising millions of dollars to support life-changing programs and donating near countless hours of volunteer service across the state. Among its longstanding traditions of giving back, the bank's annual Service Week raises awareness of community issues and pairs employees with opportunities to enrich lives and make a positive impact. In recognition their efforts, BankNewport is the recipient of UWRI's **2019 Corporate Partnership Award**. The award was accepted on the bank's behalf by president and CEO, Sandra J. Pattie.

Established to recognize young Rhode Islanders who serve their community through exceptional leadership and volunteerism, this year's **Young Leader Spark! Award** was presented to **Marcela Betancur**. An active member of UWRI's Young Leaders Circle (YLC), Marcela is the executive director of the Latino Policy Institute, where she advocates for policy solutions that focus on issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, and economic equity. With the YLC, she gives freely of her time to help other young Rhode Islanders learn the skills to build a secure future, personally and professionally.

Presented for the first time, the inaugural **Women United Award** was given to **Anne Ciresi** of FM Global. It has been more than 30 years since Anne first became involved with UWRI, drawn to the organization's work with children. Currently its event committee chair, Anne is a founding member of UWRI's Women United, a group of like-minded women who share their ideas, talents, and philanthropy to improve childhood literacy. Along with playing an important role in establishing UWRI's annual Children's Book Drive and its subsequent success – more than 200,000 books collected since 2012 – Anne is passionate about mentoring the next generation of young people who will make a difference in Rhode Island.

In recognition of the partnership between the Labor community and UWRI, Rhode Island labor unions choose the recipient of the **Dante F. Mollo Labor Award** to be honored during the Annual Celebration. This year's award was presented to the **Providence Teachers Union**; accepted on their behalf by union president Maribeth Calabro. Supporting a culture where teachers' giving back does not end at the classroom door, union members volunteer their time in the community and organize special programs, such as its Providence Princess Initiative to help families each prom season. The union also hosts one of UWRI's largest annual workplace campaigns.

The evening's final award, the **John H. Chafee Lifetime Service Award**, was presented to **Sharon Conard-Wells**. As the executive director of West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation, Sharon's 27 year career at the helm of the organization has seen her work touch thousands of lives. Under her leadership, WEHDC has raised \$115 million for community development, become a HUD-approved counseling agency, redeveloped two Brownfield historic mills, and completed three low-income tax credit rental projects.

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United Way of Rhode Island is changing lives and strengthening our communities by investing in proven programs that work over the short-term, and are scalable over the long-term. For more information, visit www.LIVEUNITEDri.org.